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## In Face of Suffering

In one way or another and sooner or later we have to suffer. It may come in physical pain or sickness or in what may be much harder to bear, the heart-ache or sorrow or the mental suffering that comes out of sympathy for those we love. If we have never experienced mental suffering it can only mean that we know very little of love. For love always brings suffering. It is in the very nature of it.


Suffering prompts the question, Why? Why do I suffer? Why is there so much suffering in the world? The only problem of suffering that Christ was interested in was the practical aspect of how to meet it, and how to win out of it the good that may be in it. His desire was to know what God wanted Him to do about it. That is clear from His curt reply to His disciples' question: "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" - "Neither, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him." The disciples were concerned about the blindness which had to be cured; but his suffering, as well as ours, is there that we may face it in the right way, that is to seek God's purpose in it and thereby to enable Him to transform it so that it may shape our life or equip us for service.

This is the only way to face suffering. Our problem is not how to explain it, but how to meet it in the right way and find an explanation. The problem of suffering is one that cannot be thought out without being also lived out.

Of all men, Christ had the most right to speak about suffering, and so we are bound to listen to Him. He knew suffering at the most poignant level in every known form; He had known bitter disappointment, unpopularity, misunderstanding, disloyalty of friends, as well as pain that comes through the vital sympathy in which He
(Continued on page 33)

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## (From Boundaries to Beyond Boundaries)








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## 北促该久



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| Fr. Dr. K.M. George |</table-markdown></div> <br> <br> The Fish-Body 

 <br> <br> The Fish-Body}


For some decades now we have been exposed to the "grand narrative" of globalisation. There are pros and cons. It seems what is missing in the whole rhetoric is the perception of the unity of humankind, rather metaphorically as one body.

The much-vaunted economic and cultural globalisation has been criticised as having created inequalities and hierarchies that subtly tear apart this deeply instinctive knowledge of our human oneness.

It is also known to have suppressed, often in a highly sophisticated manner, the authentically diverse identities and selfesteem of many a people on earth in favour of the power wielders.

It may not be unfair to say that it is now when the Corona virus in its various incar-
nations has penetrated every nook and corner of the globe that we have become global. It is bitterly ironic that the virulence of the virus that respects no social, political or racial borders has united our world by frightening surprise.

A closely allied buzzword is "corporate". The global and the corporate go hand in hand in our present-day understanding. We know the word "corporate" comes from the Latin "corpus" which means "body". The verb "corporare" means "to form into a body". Again the metaphor of the body underlies most of our global business terms though we seem to have completely ignored it. Instead of " incorporating" or making all humans part of the living body, we have fragmented the one body in view of higher profit, pitted nation against nation, humans against nature, making weapons, war and desolation.

The pandemonium unleashed by the pandemic Covid- 19 has suddenly awakened us, however rudely, to the primordial truth that we, all humanity, are one body. The global therapeutic response to this pandemic, therefore, must necessarily include the whole human race as one body in its compassionate solidarity,
mutuality, sharing of resources and the common vision of a sustainable future.

We are all familiar with the quote from Aristotle that the human being is a social animal. The primordial herd instinct is implied here.

We know that the herd instinct is a powerful driving force in the life of animals, birds and fish. The human species is also endowed with this gift . Notwithstanding the many theories in social anthropology, evolutionary biology and business psychology that seek to explain it in terms of self-protection and profit, one may also assume in a simple manner that the herd instinct is a left-over from the primal biological experience of one body.

Attached is a recent lockdown painting titled "The Fish- Body", (acrylic 4'x3') that seeks to represent a large school of fish streaming into the shape of one single fish rising from the depths and moving to the source of light and air. From a distance it is one single fish, but as you zoom in, it contains innumerable individuals who constitute the one body.

As tens of thousands of our sisters and brothers gasp for breath we need to rise as one body beyond religion, region and race, and share our resources and protect each other in a one-body act of "incorporating" and rising together to the source of air, light and life.






















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## Kingdom of God - 5 <br> Dr. T. Jacob John, Vellore

## Role of Science in Healing Mission Christava Dharma

There is tension between religion and science in the minds of many. Much meditation is needed to relieve this tension. There are people of deep faith who have viewed science with suspicion and scientists who have lost faith on account of perceived contradiction. Both are sad examples of the unresolved tension in the mind. Who will rescue us from this conundrum?

There are some who keep the two in two compartments of the mind and deny any tension in the mind. That is our version of denial. Denial is no solution, the psychologist will tell us. Compartmentalisation is a slippery slope, for, keeping faith in God and faith in mammon in two compartments may also be accepted as necessary to live life playing one against the other as some very wealthy Christians are prone to. Matters get worse if the compartments are intellectual or cognitive mind for science and affective or emotional mind for faith and religion. Now we can put mammon also in the cognitive part of mind and justify actions that prick the conscience, justify it as necessary in this world, to be 'practical'. Jesus was particularly harsh on hypocrisy, so beware.

When evidence contradicts belief, we tend to develop 'cognitive dissonance', an unpleasant feeling people want to avoid, and sweep the problem under the mind's carpet. One item that could trigger 'cognitive dissonance' is the theory of evolution, which goes contrary to the creation narrative in the Book of Genesis. This is not the occasion to discuss this item, but sweeping it under the carpet is not helpful or healthy. Let church leaders and theologians find a solution and teach (in Sunday schools) and
preach (in Sunday sermons). If the church also lets the problem fester, we should not blame children finding their own ways out of the conundrum. Some may lose faith altogether (accepting that evidence contradicts faith, which is not true), while others may seek comfort among people who accentuate faith through emotional methods used by charismatics and the like (which is not all bad). Children are seekers with 'fertile minds' - the 'seeds' that fall there will germinate and flourish. May the church understand the needs of growing children and youth, and sow the good seeds.

There is an important point to be taken note of, while meditating on the process of creation, with the Genesis narrative and the theory put forth by science. In the Nicene Creed that we recite often, we declare: "We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds....through Him all things were made..." So, the creation narrative has clearly been amended after the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ - how far amended, hard to tell.

Therefore it is important to study the author (Moses), source of information (not stated), timing of writing (a few generations after Abraham), cultural context (Mesopotamian), etc.

Personally for me, there was nothing in Sunday school lessons that prepared me to discern if joining medical college was or was not consonant with the Christian faith. The best place to sort it out, I thought, would be the Christian Medial College in Vellore. To make matters worse, when I applied for church sponsorship for admission in CMC, my father was
asked to pay money for obtaining sponsorship. As a young idealist, I said to my father that I cannot accept sponsorship from church bought with money, and my father agreed. I joined the Trivandrum Medical College. While I sympathised with the church's stand, I could not condone it. A member of the church wanting to study medicine had to be encouraged by the church since it helps to add one more worker in the healing ministry, so I thought. I was disturbed to think that the church was perhaps not interested in the healing ministry.

The main issue here was the lack of preparation provided during childhood, to make choices, and that too for a career steeped in science. Here is a lesson for every church denomination; If we do not address the real issues that create tension in the minds of youth, do not then complain if many lose their way and leave the church and seek comfort elsewhere. Sweeping anything under the carpet is not the way to enter and live in the kingdom of God.

Every instance of healing that Jesus performed was counted as a miracle. He gave power to the twelve Apostles and the seventy disciples whom He commissioned to spread the gospel of the kingdom of God, to announce the arrival of the king (not as 'king' but as Christ) and to heal the sick, in Jewish towns, to heal necessarily by the power of God, in other words, miraculously. Later on, after the earthly ministry of Jesus was concluded, St. Peter and St. Paul had the power to heal by miracle, used rather sparingly.

Many a time, Jesus asked the ones who needed or pleaded for healing, "Do you believe?" Thus we use the phrase 'faith healing' for healing by miracle. The woman with chronic haemorrhage had faith, and got healed by faith, by the power of Jesus, by touching the helm of His garment; so also, the Roman centurion and the Greek woman, whose faith is recorded in the gospels. The gospels written by Mark and Luke read a lot like medical handbooks: congenital diseases, psychiatric diseases, infectious diseases (leprosy), limb muscle paralysis (not polio for
sure, since poliovirus had not yet become a human virus; other late-comer viruses include measles, HIV and SARS Coronavirus-2), uterine haemorrhage, epilepsy, high fever and so on. God has power to heal diseases, but healing by miracle is not a right, but a privilege - the distinction, God alone knows.

In contemporary times there are occasional instances of healing by miracle. One well known witness is that of Gulshan Fatima, a crippled girl who was healed by Jesus and then became a preacher (The Torn Veil. The Story of Sister Gulshan Esther, 1984 - book available in many Christian book shops). Jesus was introduced to her through the Quran, in the SuraMarium, as 'the only prophet with the power to heal'. Later Jesus revealed Himself to Gulshan and she was healed.

The Roman Catholic Church declares selected individuals as Saints, for which there should be authenticated events of miracles, most common being healing of incurable diseases. The basic principle is that miracles can only be performed by God, either through Jesus directly, or through Saints who may plead with God for miraculous healing of someone who seek the mediation of the Saint, through supplication. Healing of a child as a result of the faith of the mother (more than one instance), the father (eg. the president of synagogue), the employer (like the centurion), even friends (like the four who carried the paralysed), are not to be forgotten.

There are some denominations or individuals who believe that illnesses should be cured only by God in answer to prayer, and not through medical/surgical interventions, particularly blood transfusion or organ transplantation. But the vast majority of believers seek healthcare from physicians. All medical missionaries in the last two centuries were physicians and surgeons trained in modern scientific medicine.

The question is, is it within the kingdom of God context that doctors of scientific medicine serve people and call it the healing ministry?

Consider the time of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Then there was no understanding of science as we understand it now. Therefore there was no reliable method of healing diseases other than by divine action, which is by miracle. However, traditional systems of medicine were prevalent in many cultures. Luke the physician was trained most probably in Greek medicine. There is no suggestion in any of Luke's writings that he faced a problem from other believers for being a physician. Also, we do not know how far such systems of medicine were successful in treating diseases.

Earlier we saw that science and scientific medicine had their origins in European culture. The biblical understanding of the duality of the creator and the created removed any fear of guilt in exploring the physical world through questioning, instrumentation, analysis and synthesis through experimentation. Human intelligence is essential for the growth and development of scientific medicine. It is one element in the concept of God's image in which humans were created. In the early days of innumerable discoveries many of the scientists themselves were firm believers in Christ.

Looking at the whole issue, it is disingenuous to argue that scientific medicine somehow contradicts any of the kingdom of God principles or values. That the same medical system is used by people of different faiths and for different reasons (such as for livelihood or even for profiteering), and that it can be used ethically or unethically by those who have learned it, and any other argument anyone can raise to devalue medicine and say that healing through scientific medicine is outside God's will, is taking an extremely narrow and dangerous view of the mission to 'go heal'.

True, medical knowledge has been used by some to commit atrocious crimes. That is no argument against using it for human health and welfare. Indeed, 'health for all' mission cannot be attempted without embracing modern scientific medicine. The kingdom values include
love, compassion, kindness, forgiveness, reconciliation, philanthropy, social justice, healing - every one of these virtues may be found being practised by people of other faiths and even by those who do not believe in God. Does that mean that they are no longer kingdom values or principles? Let God be the judge between those who practise the healing as Christava Dharma and those who do so for any other motivation, if indeed such judgement is necessary. For the hungry, food from any source will satisfy hunger. If the churches are not adequately fulfilling the healing ministry, the secular establishments will fill in the gap. The fruits of their healing work are there for all to see.

Medical science has taught us that diseases can be prevented through the mitigation of their causes or causative or contributory factors that medical people call 'determinants'. Many diseases have social determinants and many have environmental determinants - by mitigating them, we can prevent many diseases. Today everybody understands that disease - specific vaccines are available and they prevent diseases in individuals and control diseases in the community. There are many vaccines in routine use, against several childhood diseases, some of them frequent cause of death. There are also vaccines not in routine use since they are not funded by the Government, but yet they are useful in preventing diseases.

Therefore, the commission 'to go heal all manner of sickness' must be expanded in the ministry of healing in the kingdom of God, to include the mission 'to go prevent all manner of sicknesses'. Scientific medicine including surgery and rehabilitation and palliation of pain, de-addiction from alcoholism and other drug addictions, in fact everything to promote health and well-being and mitigation of suffering from any illness, is all, part of Christava Dharma, the mission to 'go heal all manner of sickness'.
(To be continued)


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'Work while you work, play while you play' is a dictum which reminds everyone about the need to focus only on one thing at a time. Once at a lunch, a VIP was asked to wait for a long time, by a person of prominence. When asked why he did that, he answered, "What other pleasures can a man enjoy three times a day?" While eating, he made sure that he enjoyed it fully. Likewise while praying, we should focus our attention on God. Only then will God be pleased with our prayers and give answers to our supplications. That is the reason why the priest, during the most important part of the Holy Mass, exhorts us to focus our attention only on God. The need for focussing on God is emphasised in a simple anecdote which deserves to be taken note of.

After a Sunday service, a lady approached the pastor and said, "I shall not attend the Church service any more". He asked her the reason for the same. She told him that she had seen many people gossiping on their cell phones during the service. She felt that many of them were hypocrites without a virtuous life. The pastor listened to her patiently and asked her whether she would be good enough to do something
for him before she took her final decision. He asked her to take a glass of water and walk around the Church twice without allowing even a drop of it to fall out. She agreed to do so. A few hours later she came back and told the pastor that she had done it.

The pastor then asked her the following three questions:

1. Did you see anybody using the cell phone?
2. Did you see anybody gossiping?
3. Did you see anybody leading a vicious life?

She replied that she had not seen anything because she was focussed on the water inside the glass so as not to allow even a drop of it to fall out. He told her, "When you come to Church, you just focus on God, the saviour." Don't let our relationship with God be determined by how other people relate themselves to God. Let it be determined by how focussed we are on God. When we are focussed on God, the things that distract us become much less important; what other people do may not distract us at all. Stay focussed on God to get answers to our prayers and also to receive His gifts in abundance.


| Bible Study |  |
| :---: | :---: |
| Prof. Suseela Alexander |  |


'The Book of Daniel' gives in detail the life and prophecies of Daniel, one of the most trusted servants of God, which covered the period of seventy years of the Babylonian captivity of the Jews.

The book has twelve chapters. The first six chapters deal with the various life-experiences of the chief characters and God's timely intervention in their affairs. Chapters seven to twelve predict through the visions to Daniel, the rise and fall of world nations, the coming of Jesus Christ, His second coming, the appearance of anti-Christ, the Tribulation Period and the End of Time.

When the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar seized Jerusalem in B.C. 605, he carried away into Babylon many Jews including some teenagers from noble Hebrew families. His intention was to give them three years' rigorous training in Babylonian language, arts and science. At the end of the period the King himself would select the most eligible of them to be appointed in the Royal Service. He replaced their Hebrew
names with Babylonian names. He ordered the Chief Officials to feed them on the King's food and the King's wine. Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine because it was offered first to the Gods of the gentiles. Daniel requested the supervisor to give them only vegetables and water. The officer, in spite of his fear, agreed to do so as God brought Daniel into his favour and good will. At the end of the training period, the King found Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego ten times more handsome, healthier and better in wisdom and knowledge than the rest.

Daniel lived a godly life, putting his faith in God and depending fully on Him. He enjoyed all the blessings God bestowed on him. He was promoted to the position of the Prime Minister of Babylon, second only to the King.

King Nebuchadnezzar issued a decree that when the royal band was played, everyone in Babylon should bow down and worship the King's gold image. If anybody failed to obey, he would be cast into the blazing furnace. The
three friends of Daniel refused to obey the King. The furious King ordered to throw them into the overheated furnace. The officials who were assigned the job, died on the spot due to the extreme heat. The King was perplexed when he saw four men, all unbound, walking in the fire. The fourth one resembled the son of God. Immediately Nebuchadnezzar announced that if any one spoke against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, he would be killed.

During the reign of Darius, a few of his administrators turned jealous towards Daniel and conspired against him. As they could not find any fault in Daniel, they planned to use his godliness against him. They prevailed upon the King to issue an order that all should petition to the King only and not to anyone else for thirty days. Those who disobeyed would be cast into the lions' den. Daniel was not willing to alter his commitment to God in order to protect himself. As usual he prayed to God three times every day. King Darius was compelled to punish Daniel because the King's decree could not be altered, according to the law of the land. So Daniel was thrown into the den of hungry lions. The King was greatly distressed and he could not sleep during that night. But the next morning, he was greatly overjoyed on seeing Daniel unharmed and alive in the den. Daniel said to him, "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths." The Almighty God was with Daniel when he was in this perilous situation. The witnessing life of Daniel influenced King Darius and he proclaimed that Daniel's God was the true and living God. He directed that all men should tremble before Him. Daniel and his friends had thus set an example of faithful endurance. The fervent prayer of Daniel, the righteous, was heard by God and he delivered him from all harm.

God had blessed Daniel with the special gift of interpretation of dreams and visions. But he never took the credit to himself. He acknowledged that God in Heaven revealed the hidden truths
and his intelligence or wisdom had nothing to do with it. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of an idol made of gold, silver, bronze and iron. Daniel could interpret the dream and predict the fall of the kingdom followed by the reign of the kingdoms of Medes, Persians, and the Greek. It gives the message that the kingdom established by God alone would remain eternal. The second dream about the 'tree' was also interpreted and it was indicated that Nebuchadnezzar would be removed from his throne because God was displeased with his arrogance. God made him insane and he lived like a wild animal roaming about and eating grass like an ox for seven years. When he started praising and glorifying God, his senses came back and he was restored to the throne. When Nebuchadnezzar exalted himself, God humbled him. God likes the humble and hates the proud.

Belshazzar, the Babylonian King failed to learn humility from the experiences of his grandfather. He dishonoured God by serving wine in the holy vessels taken from the Temple of Jerusalem. While the King was revelling in drinking along with his officers, wives and concubines, a disembodied hand appeared on the wall of his palace and wrote something (Mene... Mene... Thekkel... Upharsin) which nobody except Daniel could read and explain. The vision predicted the end of his rule. He was killed during that night itself by Darius. God's hands are behind all the historical events in this world.

In Chapter 9, Daniel is found in earnest prayer confessing his sins and the sins of all Jews. He humbled himself through fasting and pleaded with God for forgiveness. God enabled him to face the problems of his life with hope and assurance. Daniel's witnessing life reflected God's ways. Daniel's faith was severely tested several times, but he emerged victorious every time, as he was dearly loved by God as well as the Kings of the gentile world.

# God Created Everything 



Scientists have tried unceasingly to get to the 'beginning' of everything; but they have always come up against a big question mark; and they have had to give up their pursuit because it did not yield the expected results. They have tried several different approaches on the same quest, but have had to give up every time.

Scientists took off from Darwin's theory of evolution; they imagined that the Creation Story in the book of Genesis in the Bible posed a problem before them. The 'true believers' among them spent many a sleepless night. It was quite some time before good sense dawned on them. Then they took a second look into the account of the 'beginnings' as it is given in the book of Genesis. Lo and behold! The 'truth' dawned on them at last, and the conflict was resolved!

And what was the solution they came to? It was simply the understanding that only God can create 'something' out of 'nothing', and that only God can create 'life' out of non-life'! In the book of Genesis we find the history of the Israelites, God's chosen people, being traced back to its beginnings. The author of the book goes as far back as the known beginnings. When he comes to the end of the 'known', he postulates Adam and Eve as the first Man and the first Woman; and he puts them in the Garden of Eden.

Yes, that is just how God created 'Man'. He created man in His own image. What does that mean? Only man, in all creation, has a mind that can share God's love with Him; no other animal has a mind of that kind. That is what it means to say that God created man in His own image. And, in the beginning, man had a mind that was in perfect harmony with the mind of God. And, that is what the Garden of Eden was all about - a state of being in perfect harmony with God!

Well then, man sinned! Why did God allow that to happen? He could have prevented it, couldn't He ? Why didn't He prevent sin from spoiling His creation? God created man with a free will. If God controlled his will, he would be a puppet in God's hands; and that is what man was not meant to be. What charm is there in 'love', if somebody has no choice but to love you? God expected man to choose to love Him! There was no compulsion on him; he had to choose to love God out of his own free will. He had a free will; otherwise man would not be a creature in the likeness of God!

So man had the freedom to go wrong, and he did; this is what happened in the Garden of Eden! Man fell out of harmony with God: he lost the Garden of Eden! And, down the ages, man has travelled further and further away from God, his maker, in pursuit of whatever was forbidden from him. This is what causes all the misery in the world.

And finally, God had to send His own Son to redeem the world from its sinful state. Jesus came and showed us how God expected us to live on this earth, and finally, he gave his own life as a ransom to save us from our sins. What Jesus won on the Calvary Cross was our atonement - our reinstallation into the position of perfect harmony with God!

Here again, there is no compulsion: the Calvary Cross offers it to us; it is for us to take it or leave it untaken. This is what true Christian life is all about: a rightabout turn from where we have reached in our sinfulness, and to make a new beginning - to make a decision to pursue the path that Jesus has shown us. The true Christian life is a journey, an arduous journey, all the way back to the Garden of Eden, that state of perfect harmony with God, which we left so long ago, and so far behind!

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## (Contd. from page 4)

was so fully one with His fellows. It all culminated in Calvary. Apart from the unimaginable agony of physical crucifixion and its outrageous cruelty, there was the scorn, the contempt, the misunderstanding of the world. For Him, at the death scene on Calvary, it was utter loneliness, the sounds He heard were curses, sneers, laughter, mockery; and to His sensitive mind a loveless word was a blow. To add to its bitterness, it was His own people who were crucifying Him - the people He had given everything He had to help and save. He passed through all our human experiences of suffering.

What was His attitude to it, His outlook towards it all? That gives us the key to His victory. The spirit in which He bore it was that of willing acceptance. "No man taketh My life from Me, but I lay it down Myself ". There was no trace of resentment, nor even resignation. Resignation is the mood which appears to accept suffering because it is God's will, but often does not really accept it. In Jesus there was acceptance, no resentment.

Behind this acceptance were one or two convictions. The deepest was his trust in the love of God and His belief in God's controlling wisdom. Just before He went to the Cross He had a struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane. There, He only needed to be clear about one thing - the will of God. So soon as that was clear He was ready to go forward. His words, "Not My will but Thine be done", was a surrender to the will of God - not submission to fate or even to a God who demanded blind obedience. It was self-dedication to God, overflowingly alive in love and wisdom, God who had called Him to bear this pain, and for ends
in which there was only goodness and mercy for Himself and for the world. He took His suffering from the hands of God. What He spoke in that tragic hour opens a window into His heart - "The cup which my Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" He meant that it had come to Him through the hands of infinite love! It was handed to Him by God, though the cruelty of man had mixed the draught. But He saw God behind it and in it. That is the secret of His peace in suffering.

Often we try to reconcile the pain of the world with love of God. We say that God does not will suffering and He has nothing to do with it, and that it is us that blunder and make havoc with His fair world. There is some truth in this, but is God not in it at all? Jesus would not have said that. God is in the throne. "Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father". Pain comes out of a universe which Divine love has created, which He governs, and of which He sees the end from the beginning. Christ took His pain from the hands of God, believing that He knew and understood it. God's love permitted it to happen. So He accepted it in perfect peace of heart, and even consent to it with a serene surrender.
(To be continued)
Courtesy : "Facing Life with Christ" (1940)

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There are some confirmed abbreviations and definitions. But over a period of time, some of them have been replaced or dethroned. For example, 'IT' which stood for 'Income Tax' so long now points to 'Information Technology'. Similarly, while 'SC' stands for 'Scheduled Caste' it also means 'Supreme Court'. Coming to 'SMS', it became popular with the advent of mobile phones, as 'Short Messaging Service', but now Corona has brought in a step-sister to mean 'Sanitizer, Mask and Social distancing'.

In the beginning, it was named 'Covid Protocol' but with the second wave it was renamed 'SMS' as an easier option. When Corona started, we did not know much about, it but we feared a lot. After one year of our sojourn with it, we claim to know more, but really donot. We are tired of caution and the ends are loose. The terms like Containment, Lockdown, Triple Lockdown, Curfew etc., have become a way of life. SMS has also gained importance.

Now SMS is also losing its added definition or orientation. 'S' which stands for sanitizer urges us to wipe or wash our hands to keep us free from infection; but, are we washing hands from our responsibilities in the society, waiting for others to perform and bring us the benefits?
'M' which means 'Mask' had a negative appeal since it was used to camouflage our countenance. Traditionally we believe that the villains of olden days had a fierce look. But now villains are appearing as saints, masking themselves to cover their intentions. Then came Corona, which glorified the mask, and made it a culture. But, is the mask now hiding our good feelings too?

The last 'S' means 'Social distancing.' Till the onslaught of Corona, there was no call for social
distancing, and we were enjoying socialization. Particularly senior citizens long for company to make their day, no matter whether it is in a library, meeting, prayer group or social function. As all means of socialization reduced to the vanishing point, we are compelled to remain inside our houses, whether we like it or not. This is an enforced leisure. The most common way out is the newspaper or the TV. Even in community living, communication has weakened. Now, is this leading to mental distancing?

We have to overcome this. On the one hand we have to maintain SMS for medical reasons but we have also to nurture a healthy relation among ourselves. Online meetings help communication but it is like Face Book friends. It is different from the conventional meetings we are used to. The only way to overcome the negative effects of SMS is to take care of each other... may be a phone call or a gesture to convey that we remember them. It shall not be an attempt to share gossips or to tell that others are wrong. We are prone to blame others when we are not satisfied with the services we get. Let us put a 'mask' on this mannerism and use the 'sanitizer' to wash away what is wrong in us. Let us spend more time in prayers for all... our relatives and friends... and then for the unknown people on the roads and in offices/ shops, risking their lives to cater to our needs and to keep us safe.

Our perception of Corona goes on changing, since what we get and share is only half-truths and half-cooked ideas. Initially, the attempts were to safeguard us, but now it is to save the players in the medical field. So let us use our God-given intelligence to select what is good for us... observe SMS to keep ourselves healthy... send SMS to keep our dear ones happy.


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